



## Partnership with MOHP, UNFPA, WHO, and GIZ to Foster Midwifery Education, Nepal

Reporting period: January 1, 2019 – March 31, 2019

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Project title: Partnership with Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP), UNFPA, GIZ, and WHO to Foster Midwifery Education

Project location: Nepal



*Former RMF nurse Pushpa (5<sup>th</sup> from the left), now a student of the Bachelor of Midwifery Sciences program, with her class at NAMS*

### January–March 2019

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## Background

Despite many programs related to women's health, including those promoting institutional deliveries, safe motherhood, capacity building of skilled birth attendants, etc., Nepal's maternal mortality rate has not seen significant improvement within the last five years, going from 281 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2011 to 258 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2016 (NDHS, 2016). Although government and NGO programs have helped reduce the maternal mortality rate, the target for 2017, i.e. the Second Long-Term Health Plan (1997-2017) goal of no more than 250 deaths per 100,000 live births, was not achieved. Nepal's infant mortality rate has also improved somewhat, going from 46 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011 to 32 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016. The neonatal mortality rate is still high as well: 21 deaths per 1,000 live births (NDHS, 2016).

Nepal's government has realized that increasing the number of specialized health professionals, such as qualified midwives, is essential to reducing the country's high maternal and neonatal mortality rates. To this end, the Bachelor of Midwifery Sciences (BMS) program was developed and continues to be supported by a consortium of partners, including the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), as well as the World Health Organization (WHO), Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and Real Medicine Foundation (RMF). The implementing organizations are the National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS) and Kathmandu University (KU), while a third institution, Karnali Academy of Health Sciences (KAHS), has been accredited and announced its intention to begin implementing the BMS program. The consortium functions to ensure support of every aspect of the BMS program without duplication of efforts, working together to build strong cadres of qualified midwives to reduce mortality and morbidity rates among mothers and newborns.

To further address the problem of maternal and neonatal mortality, Nepal's Ministry of Health is also planning to implement a Proficiency Certificate Level (PCL) midwifery program to replace the preexisting Skilled Birth Attendant (SBA) program. RMF has been involved in the curriculum development for this program in collaboration with other external development partners and organizations, including GIZ, UNFPA, the Midwifery Society of Nepal (MIDSON), and the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), as well as implementing universities, midwifery nurses from various hospitals and nursing colleges, and other experts in the field.

## RMF's Presence

As an external development partner with MHOP and UNFPA, Real Medicine Foundation's plan for long-term support to midwifery education in Nepal includes the following activities:

- Develop a database for the Nepal Nursing Council (NNC) to track active nurses and midwives in Nepal.
- Provide faculty training in collaboration with GIZ and UNFPA.
- Strengthen training sites and the skills lab at NAMS and KAHS in coordination with the MOHP, UNFPA, and other partners by providing relevant teaching and training materials.
- Provide one full-time international mentor.
- Fund student scholarships (covering all tuition fees at NAMS) every year for the first 3 years of the program.
- Provide selected essential teaching and learning materials to NAMS, such as books, computers, LEDs, and overhead projectors, to ensure that student midwives are provided with an education that is both up-to-date and evidence-based.

## Summary of Activities

- RMF participated in the Orientation Workshop on Simulation-Based Education, organized by the Nursing and Social Security Division
- RMF participated in the external development partners (EDP) meeting

- NAMS students conducted an exhibition on breastfeeding

### **Orientation Workshop on Simulation-Based Education**

A workshop was held to orient the stakeholders to the significance of simulation in clinical practice for midwifery education. It was organized by the Nursing and Social Security Division under the Department of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Population. Dr. Pushpa Chaudhary, Secretary of the MoHP, was the chief guest of the program. Director General of the Department of Health Services Dr. Guna Raj Lohani, Chief of Quality Standards and Regulation Dr. Dipendra Raman Singh, and President of the Nepal Nursing Council Prof. Goma Devi Niraula were the distinguished guests of the program.

After the distinguished guests were seated, a welcome speech and an overview of the program were delivered by Roshani Laxmi Tuitui, Director of Nursing and Social Security Division. During her presentation, she explained the present status of nursing education and practice as well as advances in the midwifery education program. She also described the benefits of simulation-based education and how it would be integrated into nursing and midwifery education. She took a strong stand for the integration of simulation-based education because of its evidence-based potential to enhance the skills of the students, teachers, and even practicing staff as well as improve the quality of health services provided.

Margaret Walsh, a representative from GIZ, who is also serving as a consultant and mentor for the midwifery students, also spoke in favor of the introduction of simulation-based education, as it could be beneficial for students to practice rare clinical scenarios, and the difficulty levels can be set according to the level of the student. Thus, they would be equipped to handle such rare cases in later stages of their careers. She also stressed the importance of simulation labs in educational and clinical settings for developing the confidence of students and practicing personnel.

In her remark speech, Prof. Goma Devi Shrestha informed the participants that the quality of nursing education and practice has always been an issue of highest priority in the council. In the near future, when newly graduated midwives are placed at different stations throughout the country, their ability to handle the cases independently as well as confidently relies on theoretical knowledge and clinical practice. As the midwifery model of care is entirely a novel subject, the groundwork of practice is yet to be firmly established. This process requires much advocacy and ongoing dialogues with the concerned stakeholders. Hence, a simulation-based technique and environment has been proposed as an ideal solution for covering topics which are not generally possible to teach in clinical settings.

In her remark speech, Secretary of MoHP Dr. Pushpa Chaudhary firstly congratulated the Nursing and Social Security Division for making a huge leap in the field of midwifery education. She heartily appreciated the efforts of everyone working for the development of nursing and midwifery education. She was elated that the education of the health professionals is not solely based on traditional textbook study, but has now expanded enough to generate evidence, and the practice has continued to develop on the basis of that evidence. The idea that simulation-based education would be helpful to practice clinical situations repeatedly and at different levels at the same time amazed her. She thanked Laerdal Foundation and GIZ for the initiative and committed that the ministry would support the plan of establishing high-end simulation labs in all seven provinces and investigate ways to implement them successfully.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Guna Raj Lohani, Director General of Department of Health Services (DoHS), thanked the organizers, participants, EDPs, and other stakeholders on behalf of DoHS for gathering and working towards the goal of minimizing maternal and neonatal mortalities through multifaceted efforts. He added that the Nursing and Social Service Division's enthusiasm for maintaining the quality of health services through improvements in

planning, restructuring, and integrating different approaches is exemplary. Furthermore, he stated that it is worth introducing simulation-based education in nursing and midwifery education and practice as one of these efforts. He encouraged the nurses to take further steps in upgrading the standard of services and assured them that the DoHS would fully cooperate.

After the formal session, representatives of Laerdal Foundation presented on the theme of simulation-based education, covering topics including the cycle of learning, areas in which simulation would prove to be the most useful, such as OSCE, and decision-making and critical thinking. They also demonstrated different learning scenarios for simulation.



*Distinguished guests at the Orientation Workshop on Simulation-Based Education*



*President of Nepal Nursing Council Goma Devi Shrestha during her remark speech*



*Director General of Department of Health Services Dr. Guna Raj Lohani during his remark speech*



*Representatives from Laerdal demonstrating a simulation scenario*

### **Midwifery Students Conduct an Exhibition on Breastfeeding**

As a part of their curriculum, the Bachelor of Midwifery Sciences students conducted a health exhibition on breastfeeding at Paropakar Maternity and Women’s Hospital. The students made various informational and educational materials for the exhibition independently. They managed stalls on different themes related to breastfeeding, informed visitors about their topics, and answered their queries. The clients of the hospital and those accompanying them also viewed the exhibition and found it very informative. The students’ mentors appreciated their efforts and congratulated them on the success of the exhibition. Altogether, 157 people attended.



*Midwifery students of NAMS explaining about breastfeeding during the exhibition*



*RMF scholarship awardee Pratiksha displaying the posters during the exhibition*



*Midwifery students with their mentors during the exhibition*